

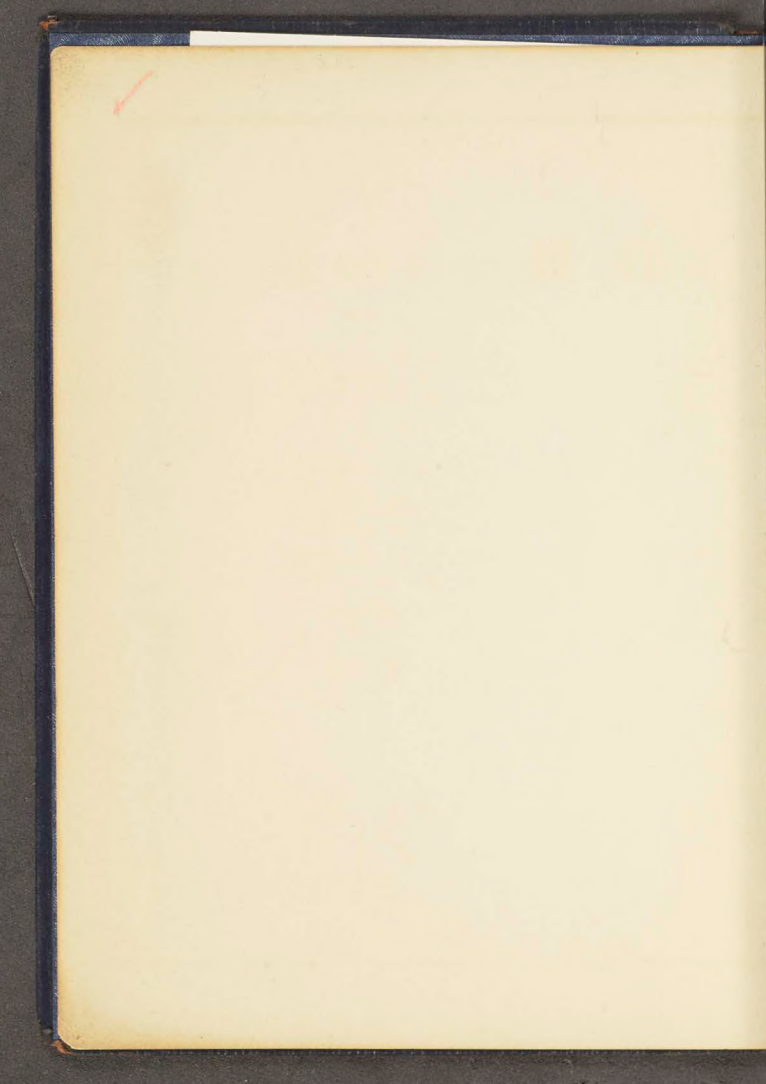
The Book.
of the Ring

THE BOOK OF THE RING

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The Book of the Ring

CONTAINING
INTERESTING INFORMATION
PERTAINING
TO

The History of Rings

The Etiquette of Rings

The Care of Rings


How to Buy Rings



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Introduction

When this ring
Parts from this finger, then parts life from hence.
— *Merchant of Venice*.

 *F* all the articles which are used for personal adornment, none has a more interesting history or has played a more important part in the world's romance than the finger ring.

No other article has signified so much in human relations, or has been endowed with so great a wealth of tradition and superstition.

Today, rings of every kind are justly coming into renewed popularity. For this reason, a greater knowledge of rings is in demand; not only information regarding the history of rings, and the part they have played in literature, but also practical, present-day information on the care of rings, the choice of rings and the etiquette connected with their wearing.

It is to impart this information in popular form that this book has been written. We hope you will find as great pleasure in reading it, as we have had in its preparation.



The History of Rings

Come down, come down, my lady fair,
A sight of you, I'll see,
And bonny jewels, brooches, rings,
I will give unto thee.

— *Old English Ballad.*

THE earliest mention we have of rings is in the Old Testament of the Holy Scriptures.

In Genesis we find that Joseph had conferred upon him the royal signet, as an insignia of authority; also, later on, that Moses permitted the use of gold rings to the priests. We find in Jeremiah that the Jews wore the signet ring on the right hand. Holy Writ contains many other references to finger rings.

Egyptian Rings

Probably the earliest existing rings are those that have been found in the tombs of ancient Egypt. Those that date the farthest back are of pure gold and simple in design. Later rings

bear hieroglyphics and still later ones, the scarab or beetle; the latter was so fastened that it would revolve instead of being a solid setting.

To the Egyptians, the scarab was sacred and they ascribed all sorts of powers to it. Several years ago, scarab rings were revived into popularity, as a novelty.

Greek and Roman Rings

The early Greeks wore signet rings, usually set with gems. While these were of gold, neighboring Sparta had a law that nothing more valuable than iron could be used for signet rings.

Imagine the President of the United States decreeing the kind of rings that people shall wear; yet it was the custom in ancient Rome for the rulers to do this.

For a long period the common people could only wear iron rings and none but high officials were permitted to wear those of gold. The ring was regarded in those days as an emblem of

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honor, for we find that those who committed any crime forfeited the distinction of wearing the annulus, or ring.

As the love for luxury increased, Romans and Greeks covered their fingers with all sorts of rings; some wore different ones for summer and winter. Reference is made to one character in classical literature who wore no less than sixty rings.

Various materials other than gold were used for rings in early days. We have specimens of silver, iron, rock crystal, paste, ivory and a stone called chalcedony.

The important part that rings have played in history is apparent in the fact that the ultimate downfall of the Roman Republic has been traced primarily to the quarrel over a ring. This led to the Social War and all its fatal consequences.

Rings in the Middle Ages

Among our British, Saxon and Medieval ancestors, rings were in common use. In British

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collections there are claimed to be the rings of both the father and the sister of Alfred the Great.

In the Middle Ages the signet ring was of great importance in religious, legal and commercial affairs. It was at this time, that the greatest degree of perfection in ring making began to display itself. Queen Elizabeth had a great fondness for finger rings. There is a very romantic story of the ring given by "good Queen Bess" to the Earl of Essex.

The Middle Ages, too, was the time of the greatest ring superstitions. For instance, there was the cramp ring, which was supposed to act as a preventive of cramps, a quality which it acquired through being blessed by the king. Other ailments were treated, also, by the wearing of rings. These superstitions were handed down from earlier days. We see this in the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, where the charmed ring of Aladdin is endowed with marvelous powers.

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Memorial rings worn in memory of a dead person, and posy rings bearing rhymes, were common in the Middle Ages, the former even down to more recent times. Our own George Washington bequeathed several mourning rings, "as mementos of his esteem and regard."

Rings were important in the 15th and 16th centuries in commercial relations. In many cases, a Trade Guild would employ a certain setting as its particular badge or mark and was known by it throughout the land. Rings were often sent as proof of genuineness with a bill of demand, or as we would call it, a draft.

Shakespeare's Ring

Among the rings of famous people of those days, we have one owned by William Shakespeare. The ring, now in a British Museum, is all gold with initials cut in the bezel or wide part and a graceful knot of flowers twining around the hoop.

The papal rings of the 15th and 17th centuries appear to have been given by the Pope to

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newly-made cardinals. They were magnificent in appearance, but of little intrinsic value. Decade rings, used at the same time, contained ten knobs, to be used much the same as counting or Rosary beads.

Thus we see that from the most ancient times, down through history, the finger ring has been more than a mere ornament; it has been an emblem of the greatest significance, a sign of honor, a mark of authority, a token of love, a religious symbol.



The Etiquette of Rings

Emblem of happiness, not bought nor sold,
Accept this modest ring of virgin gold.
Love in this small but perfect circle trace,
And duty in its soft, yet strict embrace.

— *Irish Poem, published 1801.*

CUSTOM, tradition and sentiment have built through the ages, a distinct etiquette in relation to the finger ring. A general knowledge of this will prove of practical value.

Significance of Various Fingers

There have always been various meanings ascribed to the placing of a ring on certain fingers of the hand.

In Finger Ring Lore, a Madam de Barrera is quoted as saying: "If a gentleman wants a wife, he wears a ring on the first finger of the left hand; if he be engaged, he wears it on the second finger; if married, on the third; and on the fourth if he never intends to be married. When a lady is not engaged she wears a hoop

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or diamond on her first finger; if engaged, on her second; if married, on the third; and on the fourth if she intends to die a maid. As no rules are given for widows, it is presumed that the ornamenting of the right hand, and the little finger of the left, is exclusively their prerogative."

Thumb rings have been worn at various times in history. The old English writer, Chaucer, refers to these. At one time the thumb ring on a woman indicated that she was a widow. Among the Romans and later in Germany, rings were worn on the second joint of the forefinger. Today only the third and the fourth are ring fingers.

There is a time to wear certain kinds of rings; there are occasions when one style of ring is more appropriate than another. Wedding and engagement rings have an etiquette all their own. It is interesting to trace the manner in which this etiquette has developed.

The use of the ring as the wedding and engagement symbol dates very far back. The reason

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that it originally came into use for these ceremonies is explained thus by Wheatley: "In ancient times, the ring was a seal by which all orders were signed and things of value secured; therefore the delivery of it was a sign that the person to whom it was given was admitted into the highest friendship and trust."

Origin of the Wedding Ring

It is claimed that the Jews were the first to use the wedding ring. Ancient Hebrew marriage rings were elaborate affairs, richly engraved and often bearing in place of a stone or signet, a miniature of the Temple at Jerusalem. The wedding rings of the Romans were generally of iron. Among Christians the ring was used in marriage ceremonies, as early as 860. The old Northmen used no ring so far as can be discovered at the present time.

The plain gold band ring used today in the wedding ceremony seems to have descended from the time of the Saxons.

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Some years ago it was the custom to have the wedding ring wide and thick. Then it was correct to engrave some appropriate inscription inside.

Now that the fashion is to have the wedding ring narrow and thin, only the initials and the date are engraved. The ring should of course be of the best gold, and once it is placed upon the bride's finger, it is her pride to see that it is never removed. There was an old superstition that when a bride lost her wedding ring she lost her husband's love. The poet Herrick sings,

And as this round
Is nowhere found
To flaw, or else to sever,
So let our love
As endless prove,
And pure as gold forever!

When a woman makes a second betrothal, it is customary for her to put off both the first wedding and first engagement ring.

Betrothal Rings

The solitaire diamond ring so universally popular today as the emblem of the engagement,

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did not always hold this place. At one time betrothal rings were of silver; later they represented two hands clasped; during the Middle Ages the gemel, or twin ring was used. This latter was composed of two interlaced rings. It was customary at the time of the betrothal for the man to put his finger through one of the loops and the woman her finger through the other. Thus they were symbolically yoked together. The links were then broken asunder; each kept his or her link till the time of the marriage, when the rings were made one again and used in the ceremony.

Today the engagement ring is correct when it contains a single stone, usually a diamond. The initials of both parties are often engraved in the ring, which should be worn on the prospective bride's third finger of her left hand. Here it remains until just before the marriage ceremony when it should be transferred to the corresponding finger of the right hand, the wedding ring taking its place on the left hand. After the

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ceremony it is customarily worn on the same finger with the wedding ring.

The question is often asked by people about to attend functions, "Shall I wear jewelry? Shall I wear my rings?"

Although it is bad form to cover one's self with jewelry, one or two rings may always be worn by either man or woman. For the girl or unmarried woman a diamond ring or one set with some other stone is appropriate. A man may wear a signet ring, a fraternal ring, bearing the emblem of a lodge or order to which he belongs, or a diamond ring.

Rings as Gifts

The giving of rings as gifts on various occasions is a very old custom. The Romans presented them to celebrate birthdays. The clients of a Roman lawyer usually gave him a ring on his natal day, and it was only worn on that and succeeding birthdays.

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Rings were given by English Monarchs on state occasions, and as New Year's gifts, while St. Valentine's Day has always held high rank in the favor of those who sought an opportunity to bestow a ring upon some near and dear one.

The ring is an appropriate offering at any age, as indicated by the popularity of baby rings. A favorite gift from the bride to the groom is a ring, either a plain band or signet.

Rings given as birthday gifts are often set with the stones appropriate to the month in which the birthday occurs. The customarily accepted birthstones for each month will be found in the following verses:

JANUARY.

By her, who in this month is born,
No gems save Garnets should be worn,
They will insure her constancy,
True friendship and fidelity.

FEBRUARY.

The February born will find
Sincerity and peace of mind;
Freedom from passion and from care,
If they the Amethyst will wear.

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MARCH.

Who in this world of ours, their eyes,
In March first open shall be wise;
In days of peril firm and brave,
And wear a Bloodstone to their grave.

APRIL.

She who from April dates her years,
Diamonds should wear, lest bitter tears
For vain repentance flow; this stone,
Emblem of innocence is known.

MAY.

She who first beholds light of day,
In Spring's sweet flowery month of May,
And wears an Emerald all her life,
Shall be a loved and happy wife.

JUNE

Who comes with summer to this earth,
And owes to June her day of birth;
With ring of Agate on her hand,
Can health, wealth and long life command.

JULY.

The glowing Ruby should adorn,
Those who in warm July are born,
Then will they be exempt and free
From love's doubt and anxiety.

AUGUST.

Wear a Sardonyx or for thee
No conjugal felicity,
The August born, without this stone,
'Tis said must live unloved and lone.

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SEPTEMBER.

A maiden born when Autumn leaves
Are rustling in September breeze,
A Sapphire on her brow should bind,
'Twill cure diseases of the mind.

OCTOBER.

October's child is born to woe,
And life's vicissitudes must know;
But lay an Opal on her breast,
And Hope will lull those woes to rest.

NOVEMBER.

Who first comes to this world below,
With drear November's fog and snow
Should prize the Topaz' amber hue—
Emblem of friends and lovers true.

DECEMBER.

If cold December gave you birth,
The month of snow, and ice, and mirth,
Place on your hand a Turquoise blue,
Success will bless whate'er you do.





The Care of Rings

So she kissed him, and whispered — poor, innocent thing —
“The next time you come, Love, pray come with a ring.”

— *Hood.*

LIKE all other articles of ornament, rings wear best and give the most satisfaction when care is taken of them.

Every owner of a ring should visit a jeweler at least once a month to have the ring cleaned and otherwise kept in good condition.

For people living in the country or small villages far removed from stores, in cases where it is not convenient to visit the jeweler, the following home cleaning remedy is offered:

Prepare a solution of lukewarm water, a few drops of ammonia, and some good pure soap. Dip a small brush (a toothbrush will do) into the solution and thoroughly clean the ring with it. Afterwards rinse in alcohol and permit the ring to dry by evaporation.

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Diamond rings, because of their value, are worthy of special attention and care. The diamond ring should be taken to the jeweler every six months, when the prongs should be examined to see that they have not loosened. This attention may involve a slight expense, but it may also prevent the loss of the diamond.

Another warning worth heeding: Take care not to strike the diamond against any hard surface, as this is liable to cause a chip, thus materially lessening the value of the gem.

Pearls are cleaned as follows: Soak them in hot water in which bran has been boiled with a little cream of tartar and alum, rubbing gently between the hands when the heat will allow it. When the water is cold renew the application until all discoloration is removed. Rinse in lukewarm water and lay them on a white paper, in a dark place, to cool and dry.

It ought hardly to be necessary to state here that rings should be removed while the hands are being washed.

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When removed for the night, or not being worn for any other reason, rings should be placed in a jewel box or other secure place. Readers are undoubtedly familiar with the ease with which rings are lost or stolen, due to the carelessness of many owners in this respect.

Repolishing

Gems are sometimes so scratched by wear that their lustre is seriously impaired. Small sums spent in having them repolished bring most satisfactory returns in the restored beauty of these prized possessions.

Resetting

Dame Fashion puts a high value on the setting of gems. Sometimes a very costly stone is indifferently mounted, for example, in an old-fashioned breastpin. It can be transformed, however, into a really beautiful and unusual ring, by resetting. Your jeweler will readily give you his expert judgment as to the possibilities of such a piece of jewelry.

How to Buy Rings

"I am a gentlemen; looke on my ring,
Ransome me at what thou wilt, it shall be paid."

MOST persons approach the purchase of a valuable ring with certain feelings of misgiving. They realize that the intrinsic characteristics are known to very few—that they could not detect a counterfeit. This merely proves that the only safeguard lies in the choice of a jeweler with a reputation established by years of honest dealing. He will cooperate in every way with you and give you the benefit of his knowledge and experience.

When buying a ring for yourself or to bestow upon another, there are several very important points to keep in mind. For example:

The Quality of the Ring

The fineness of gold, in rings, is usually expressed in karats, abbreviated kt. A karat is

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a twenty-fourth part. When a ring is said to be 22-kt. gold, it contains 22 parts of pure gold and 2 of alloy.

A material that has come into great vogue for women's rings is platinum, because of its beautiful silver color, offering a contrast to the gold rings so universally worn.

Modern Styles in Rings

One often hears of a man's Belcher ring, or a woman's Tiffany setting. A technical knowledge of the different ring terms might only be confusing, but a simple explanation of the more common terms used may not be out of place here.

Among diamond rings probably the best known setting is the Tiffany, easily recognized by the long, slender prongs extending out from the ring, and into which the stone is set.

Another style of woman's diamond setting is the Cluster, consisting of small diamonds or chips, set in a group. There are endless fancy

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variations, such as twin settings (two diamonds) or a diamond and another stone, engraved settings, marquise and princess settings, distinguished by wide bezels, set with several diamonds or other stones. In this latter class is the After-Dinner ring, which has attained such a vogue recently.

In men's diamond rings, the principal styles are: the Belcher, which comes in both round and flat, and resembles somewhat the woman's Tiffany, except that the prongs are wider and heavier and do not extend out from the ring so much; the Gypsy setting which can best be described as without any prongs and having the stone set into the ring itself; and the Tooth mounting, both plain and fancy, in which the stone is held by prongs or teeth which lie flatter than those in the Belcher. As in the women's styles, there are countless variations of these primary styles.

The Signet ring, such a favorite with both men and women, is almost too well known to

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need any explanation here. Cameo settings have been very popular in recent years, a renewal of an old fashion.

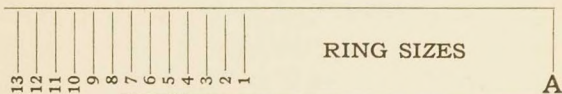
The Matter of Fit

When trying on for size, remember that a ring should fit snugly, going over the knuckle. A ring too large is annoying and uncomfortable. It continually slips around the finger and is apt to get lost.

Rings should, whenever possible, be bought in person, but circumstances sometimes prevent this, and it becomes necessary to order by mail. Or, there is the problem of the young man who desires to purchase an engagement or a wedding ring, and wishes to avoid the embarrassment of calling at the store with the young lady for whose finger it is intended. In either case, the ready cooperation and advice of your jeweler will be of great value, and the following will furnish a good method for determining the finger size:

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Cut a narrow strip of paper so that the ends will exactly meet when it is drawn tightly around the finger at the exact spot where the ring is to be worn. Now lay one end of the paper on the following diagram at the right end (marked A) and the other end of the paper will indicate, by number, the size to be ordered. As an additional safeguard, enclose the strip of paper with your order.



Conclusion

HAVING glanced back into the past and seen the significance of the finger ring, its wealth of association, the particular etiquette connected with it, and recognizing the value of this most prized adornment, the following advice is the logical conclusion:

First select some jeweler in whom you have absolute confidence. Go to him and tell him the purpose for which you desire the ring—whether for yourself, or as a gift to another. Tell him something of your own preferences, or the tastes of the person who is to receive the ring. Then tell him what you can afford to pay.

If you follow this course, we are sure your ring purchases will be happy ones, and you will never have reasons to regret them.

